Penny Draper

Terror at Turtle Mountain

Study Guide
Terror
at Turtle Mountain

Penny Draper

A Novel Study Guide
by Ruth Garnett
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About the Author

Penny Draper has been entranced by stories all of her life. When she was little, her most prized possession was a flashlight, which she used to read under the covers long after lights out. Her mother said she ate books.

Penny received a Bachelor’s Degree in Literature from Trinity College, University of Toronto and, on the side, attended the Storytellers’ School of Toronto. For the next fifteen years, Penny shared tales as a professional storyteller at schools, libraries, parks, castles, universities, educational conferences, festivals and on radio and television.

In 1985, she started the Prince George Storyteller’s Roundtable, a dynamic group dedicated to promoting the oral tradition throughout northern British Columbia. She has also been a member of the Victoria Storytellers’ Guild and the Victoria Children’s Literature Roundtable.

Penny is currently a freelance writer and reviewer whose articles have appeared in newspapers and magazines. She also works at the University of Victoria. She has two grown-up children and her favourite pastime is to travel to far-off places and share the stories of people who live differently than she does.

Penny can be contacted at: dpdraper@shaw.ca.
Introduction

At 4:00 a.m. April 29, 1903, Nathalie lies awake in the booming coal mining town of Frank, at the base of Turtle Mountain, listening for the whistle of a train – the Spokane Flyer, bringing her American cousin Helena for a visit. Instead, Nathalie hears rocks tumbling down the mountain onto the town and the railway track. She and her mother are safe, but what about others? As she helps search for survivors, desperate questions fill her mind. How many have died? Will the men inside the mine be safe? Will someone warn the train in time?

That morning the northeast face of Turtle Mountain dropped one hundred million tons of limestone on the town. Seventy-six people died, but twenty-three were rescued from under the rocks, seventeen escaped from the mine, and the Flyer was stopped in time. This is a beautifully written novel, with engaging characters and authentic historical detail. It’s a story of discovery, as Nathalie – Nattie to her friends – finds her own strengths and skills and the courage to use them.

A Message From the Author

What made you want to write?

I have always loved stories. As a young girl I read a lot. I liked to make books as well; I would write a story, draw pictures to go with it and then staple all the pages together. When I had children of my own, I enjoyed sharing stories with them. If we were driving in the car or waiting in the grocery store lineup, there wasn’t always a book handy, so I started to tell stories without a book. Sometimes at the park I would tell stories and other children would follow me home, asking for more tales. That’s how I became a storyteller. I told lots and lots of stories until my brain filled up and there was no more room. That’s when I started to write my stories down again; I needed to make room in my head!

What inspired you to write Terror at Turtle Mountain?

I first heard the true tale of the disaster at Turtle Mountain from another storyteller. It was a fascinating story, and I wanted to learn more about this piece of Canadian history. The research led me to visit the Frank Slide Interpretive Center, which is a very exciting place. The huge limestone boulders still lay where they fell over a hundred years ago and to this day hardly any trees or plants grow there. I couldn’t help but wonder how terrifying it must have been to be living in Frank that night so I created Nathalie, my heroine. By writing Nathalie’s story, I could see the slide through her eyes.
Did writing come naturally to you or did you have to work hard at it?

Yes, it comes naturally to me and yes, I have to work hard at it. Writing helps me make sense of the world. When I am happy or excited or confused or upset, I write. Some people make sense of their world by drawing pictures; some people sing songs; some run as fast as they can. I play with words. The hard part is making my words make sense to others. To do that, I need to practice, rewriting passages over and over again, trying different words and points of view until I am satisfied.

What was the first book on the subject you ever published?

_Terror at Turtle Mountain_ is my very first book. It is the first time I have tried to put the words that come from my mouth down on paper. But I have lots of stories still filling up my head and my heart, so I hope to do more writing. I’m particularly interested in stories about Canadian history, for there are so many exciting things that have happened here.

How can parents and children find out more about the Frank Slide?

In the back of my book there is a section called “Author’s Note.” It has more information about the Slide, about coal mining, about the CPR trains and about the Blackfoot people who lived in the area at the time and play a role in the story. There are pictures of the Slide, before and after, and Internet links to interactive sites with games and movies.

But the best thing to do, if you can, is to visit the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre and see the slide itself, either online or in person. It is a sight that you will not forget, a reminder that the forces of nature will always be larger and stronger than we are.

Any advice for aspiring young writers?

Every writer will suggest that you write, write, write. It doesn’t matter what you write about, as long as the subject interests you. Think about what you want to tell your best friend the next time you see him or her. Maybe you want to tell about your soccer game, or the funny thing that happened at karate, or how much your little brother annoys you. Now write it down. Does it come out differently when you tell it on paper rather than with your mouth? Can you add something to the story to make it more exciting; perhaps a new character or an animal or even a little magic? Always remember when you write that you are in charge of the story; you can make it do anything you want.

For the Web sites mentioned in the Author’s Note, see the Resources page in the _Before You Read_ section of this guide.
Organization of This Guide

Within this guide you will find a variety of activities intended to help readers appreciate and understand the novel, *Terror at Turtle Mountain*. Literary qualities are considered, comprehension is examined, and connections to the curriculum and to readers’ real lives are pursued. Each teacher using this guide will be able to choose those exercises that best suit the needs of her or his students. We encourage you to add other activities as well.

In addition, many school division Web sites have information on various instructional strategies. For instance, the Saskatoon Public School Division’s Online Learning Centre can be found at: http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/DE/PD/instr/index.html.

Four categories of responses are offered for each chapter: *Preparing to Read, After the Reading, Extending the Reading* and *Thinking about the Writing*.

**Preparing to Read:**
- The first part of the study of each chapter has activities that require class discussion and personal reflection. Students may be asked to make predictions. These activities are intended to help the students anticipate the coming chapter.

**After the Reading:**
- Questions for each chapter target points essential to plot and character development. Add other questions of your own. Encourage students to develop questions about the reading that their classmates could answer.

**Extending the Reading:**
- From the selection of activities in this section, choose some which will add to students’ enjoyment of the reading and involve them actively in what they’ve read.

**Thinking About the Writing**
- These activities will help students to develop their knowledge and skills of the various elements of writing a story. Choose from activities focusing on character development, role of setting, plot development, theme development, imagery and literary devices.
OBJECTIVES AND ASSESSMENT

Children in Grades Four to Seven will enjoy reading this novel or having it read to them. For the purposes of this guide, information is taken from the Grade Five section of the curriculum. The Saskatchewan curriculum (Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level, 2002) has very detailed objectives for the six strands of Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, Viewing and Representing for Grades One to Five. The complete objectives can be seen at: http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/docs/ela/learnobj/g4-o1.html.


This novel study could be integrated into a Grade Four or Five Social Studies unit. (Social Studies: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level, 1995).

- Grade Four: Heritage – Immigrants and Settlers
- Grade Five: Heritage – Building a Nation: Immigration, Confederation, the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Treaties, and the Wars
- http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/docs/elemsoc/g4u22ess.html

COMMON ESSENTIAL LEARNINGS

The six categories of the Common Essential Learnings (Communication, Numeracy, Critical and Creative Thinking, Technological Literacy, Personal and Social Values and Skills, and Independent Learning) overlap and are interrelated. However, for the purposes of this study, the main CELs developed are Communication, Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal Social Values and Skills, and Independent Learning. The handbook on CELs can be accessed at: http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/docs/policy/cels/index.html
## Grade Five English Language Arts Learning Objectives at a Glance

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<tr>
<th><strong>Listening</strong></th>
<th><strong>Speaking</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>• Listen attentively, courteously, and purposefully to a range of texts from</td>
<td>• Participate in a variety of shared language experiences (e.g., dramatization, role play, interviewing)</td>
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<tr>
<td>a variety of cultural traditions for pleasure and information</td>
<td>• Share ideas, observations, and experiences courteously during structured small and large group talk, and fulfill own role as a group member</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Listen to and follow three and four-step oral directions</td>
<td>• Prepare and present narrative presentations that establish a situation, point of view, setting, and relate events in an effective sequence</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Activate and build upon prior knowledge and experiences</td>
<td>• Prepare and present talks and oral reports to engage and inform an audience</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Set purpose and predict what presentation might be about</td>
<td>• Experiment with words and sentence patterns to create interest and variety</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Formulate general and specific questions to identify information needs</td>
<td>• Use language appropriate to audience, purpose, and situation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use the language cueing systems in oral text to construct meaning</td>
<td>• Set goals to develop further own speaking skills and strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Make inferences and draw conclusions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Set goals to develop further own listening skills and strategies</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Reading</strong></th>
<th><strong>Writing</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>• Orally and silently, read a range of contemporary and classical grade-appropriate texts for enjoyment and information</td>
<td>• Write narratives, explanations, stories, and researched reports with increasing confidence, clarity, and fluency</td>
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<td>• Adapt reading process and strategies for different purposes</td>
<td>• Write single and multiple-paragraph compositions</td>
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<td>• Answer inquiry or research questions using a variety of information sources</td>
<td>• Provide sufficient details to support main point</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Build connections among previous experiences, prior knowledge, and a variety of texts</td>
<td>• Organize ideas in an appropriate sequence</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Confirm understanding and self-correct when necessary</td>
<td>• Develop and demonstrate an understanding of written language conventions including:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Apply cueing systems to construct meaning</td>
<td>• indent paragraphs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understand a variety of forms and genres</td>
<td>• use complete and well-formed sentences with proper capitalization and end punctuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Recognize organizational patterns of texts</td>
<td>• extend understanding of punctuation marks to include the use of the colon in time and lists, quotation marks for speakers and titles, and correct use of apostrophes and commas</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Support opinions with evidence from text</td>
<td>• use common conjunctions and transitional words (e.g., and, then, next)</td>
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<td>• Compare information from different sources</td>
<td>• spell correctly common words and use a strategy to learn to spell new words</td>
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<td>• Identify how and why word structures change meaning</td>
<td>• Write legibly using correct letter formation and consistent size and spacing</td>
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<td>• Make judgments and draw conclusions</td>
<td>• Set goals to develop further own writing skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Set goals to enhance development of own reading habits, skills, and strategies</td>
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<td><strong>Viewing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Representing</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Participate in a variety of guided and independent viewing experiences</td>
<td>• Convey ideas and information using a variety of media and formats including</td>
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<td>from a variety of cultural traditions</td>
<td>illustrations, dramatizations, tableaux, diagrams, three-dimensional objects,</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Recognize point of view and biases in visual texts</td>
<td>etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use various visual texts to find information (e.g., the Internet,</td>
<td>• Use graphic organizers (e.g., story map, time line, summary chart) to clarify</td>
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<td>illustrated print text, television, video)</td>
<td>and shape understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Distinguish between fact and opinion</td>
<td>• Choose images, words, and sounds appropriate to audience, purpose, and effect</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Begin to understand that a visual text represents a perspective</td>
<td>• Use appropriate visual aids to enhance spoken and written communication</td>
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<td>• Begin to recognize persuasive techniques in visual texts</td>
<td>• Prepare organized multimedia presentations using pre-established organizers</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use the visual cueing systems in text to construct and confirm meaning</td>
<td>and criteria</td>
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<tr>
<td>and identify key ideas</td>
<td>• Set goals to develop further own representing skills and strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Set goals to develop further own viewing skills</td>
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**Before You Read**

**Themes**

Several themes are dominant in the story: Family Values, My Relationships with Others, Building a Community, Surviving Hardships, Preservation of Heritage, Heroes and Heroines, Growing Up, Historical Fiction, Stepping Back in Time, Pastimes, Cultures and Celebration. These are developed within a context of cultural customs, events and issues and our place in history. This novel could be read as part of an integrated unit studying one or more of these possible themes. The complete list of Suggested Unit Themes can be retrieved from the English Language Arts Bibliography for the Elementary Level (K-5), a support document for the Saskatchewan Evergreen Curriculum. http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/curr_inst/iru/bibs/elemelabib/forew.html#sugg.

**Resources**

A factual account of the Frank Slide can be found at the following web address: http://www3.symatico.ca/goweezer/canada/frank.htm. The tragedy is recounted in four parts and includes maps, diagrams and the names of the townspeople.

CBC TV’s “On this Day” archives has video including interviews with descendants of survivors: http://archives.cbc.ca/IDC-1-70-2243-13371-10/on_this_day/disasters_tragedies/twt.

The official site of the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre can be accessed at: www.frankslide.com.

The author includes research information regarding:

- Historical figures and other characters in the story, pastimes and turn-of-the-century games: http://www.emporia.edu/cgps/tales/m95tales.htm
- The Blackfoot Storytellers: http://www.glenbow.org/blackfoot/index.htm
- The Canadian Pacific Railway – scroll down to Adventure Train game http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/PM.cgi?LM=Games&LANG=English&AP=vmc_search&scope=Games

**Vocabulary Development**

Have students begin vocabulary charts, and enter new vocabulary during and after each section read. Use the chart (next page) or have students make their own chart. You can incorporate the new vocabulary into your regular Language Arts program.
# New Vocabulary

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Summary

The story begins with thirteen-year-old Nathalie’s recurring dream, a memory from her early childhood. She dreams of her grandfather’s anger and disappointment with his daughter’s choice to leave a comfortable home to live in a coal-mining town with her husband and child, a life which would surely be full of tremendous hardship. Nathalie remembers his words and believes that she is “that child” and the “disappointment” brought upon her grandfather.

Preparing to Read

- Before students read this passage, explain that the prologue is an introductory passage which provides important information about the main character and her perceptions of her family.
- What do you think parents want most for their child? Does this change as the child grows to be an adult? Discuss. This could be a brainstorming exercise for the whole class, or an activity where small groups share and compare results with other groups.

After the Reading

- Emily has a recurring dream about her early childhood. List some words that might describe her feelings as she wakes up.
- How do you think parents feel when their child makes a choice that could be harmful or cause difficulty? Do you think parents ever stop loving their children? Why do you think it is hard for some people to show their emotions?

Extending the Reading

- Are memories always accurate? Have two or three students recall or describe the same incident (perhaps a previous lesson, class trip, assembly, sporting event, television program, etc.) Elicit from students how recounting can be quite different between individuals, and yet accurate according to the teller. Discuss the implications of this regarding Nathalie’s feelings towards her grandfather.

Thinking About the Writing

- Explain to students that the prologue serves an important role. Not only is it an introductory statement before the beginning of the novel, but it allows the reader to understand the main character more deeply. This knowledge will enable the reader to better predict Nathalie’s actions and reactions throughout the story.
- Why is the prologue printed in italics?
Chapters One and Two
(Pages 3–14)

Summary

Thirteen-year-old Nathalie and her widowed mother live in the booming mining community of Frank, in the Northwest Territories of Canada in 1903. Their daily routines give us clues as to what life is like and how they struggle to make ends meet. Mother hurries off to work as a housekeeper at the finest hotel in town and Nathalie has chores to do at school, such as milk duty and making chalk. We meet Toby, a classmate who manages to get others to do his work, and Lester, whom Nathalie is secretly fond of. Students are paid bounty for the gopher tails they have collected and a young student misunderstands and brings a pail full of dead (and smelly) gophers that he has collected.

Preparing to Read

- On a map, locate the community of Frank in present-day Alberta.
- What do you think life was like for a school-age child in the town of Frank in 1903? How was it different from your life today?

After the Reading

- Nathalie has responsibilities both at home and at school. Describe what her day would be like. Would you like to trade places with her? Why or why not?
- List some of the chores that students were required to do in school. How does this compare to the chores that you are required to do at school?
- Why do you think Turtle Mountain makes Nathalie feel uncomfortable?

Extending the Reading

- Nathalie felt different from all the kids with “real families.” What do you think she wanted in a family? What do you think makes a “real” family?

Thinking About the Writing

- Have students begin a Reading Response Journal. Information on Response Journal use and assessment can be found on the following pages.
- Also provided on the following pages are two options for students to show their understanding of character development. Use character bookmarks or begin a character chart.
- Add new words to the Vocabulary Chart.
**Reading Response Journals**

Response journals require the students to write about their response to reading a book or listening to a story. This strategy encourages students to think deeply about the materials they read and to relate this information to their prior knowledge and experiences. This interaction between reader and text extends the reading experience into the “real life” application of information. Response Journals allow students to reflect on and raise questions about a text. These journals are especially valuable for promoting opinion making, value judgments and critical thinking. You may want the students to have a separate notebook for this activity. If the students have not used a Reading Response Journal before, you may want to demonstrate its use. You also may want to explain how a rubric will be used to assess the journal.

The Online Learning Centre of the Saskatoon Public School Division has many suggestions and templates for using and assessing response journals. These can be accessed from:

Have students begin response journals that can be added to at the end of each reading. Below are some suggestions for initiating Reading Response Journal entries. As well, you may give response stems that are specific to what has been read.

**Reading Response Journal Starters**

I think...
I wonder...
I know...
I predict...
I suspect...
I admire...
I like...
I don’t like...
I feel...
I was surprised...
I noticed that...
It’s hard to believe...
If I had been there, I would have...
I don’t understand...
My question is...
This is similar to...

The part about ________ reminds me of...
In this chapter, the main event (action) is...
In this chapter, the main character is...
My favourite part is when...
The most exciting part is_________ because...
A part I find confusing is...
I would change...
I am most like the character______because...
An interesting word is...
I thought it was funny when...
The part that makes a real picture in my mind is...
# Reading Response Journal Assessment

**Student** _________________________________  **Date** ___________

**Key**
1 = weak, undeveloped  
2 = fair, partly developed  
3 = acceptable, adequately developed  
4 = good, well developed  
5 = strong, fully developed

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<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
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<td>Full responses are given (evidence, reasons, examples)</td>
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<td>Responses show an understanding of the story (comprehension, details)</td>
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<td>Responses show personal connections to the story (like, dislike, question)</td>
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<td>Responses show literary awareness (characters, setting, plot)</td>
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<td>Responses show an understanding of critical thinking (use of humour, what would happen if...)</td>
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**Comments:**
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<th>Character’s Name</th>
<th>Look for words that tell about your character. Hints:</th>
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<td>How does the character look?</td>
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<td>How does s/he act?</td>
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<td>How do others react to him/her?</td>
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<th>Character’s Name</th>
<th>Look for words that tell about your character. Hints:</th>
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<td>How does the character look?</td>
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Character Development

Choose a character from the story and write his/her name in the centre oval. Write four character traits in the joining smaller ovals, and then following the lines, write evidence for each trait in the large ovals. Remember to use page numbers for reference.
Chapters Three and Four
(Pages 15–28)

Summary

Nathalie hopes to help with family finances but does not have the dexterity for needlework. Her insecurities often lead her to a hiding place under the bridge at Gold Creek, which eventually comes to represent a place for wishes. Nathalie daydreams of a future away from the conditions of a coal-mining community, perhaps involving an escape by train. Nathalie’s teacher, Miss Ryaness, asks her to help by telling a story to the younger students. She happily makes up a story with the children, showing her creative talent. After school the older girls decide to visit Andy, the local recluse trapper who is renowned for his stories. As the girls pass the miners’ cottages, we get insights into the lives of several families. Andy welcomes the girls and begins a story about Turtle Mountain.

Preparing to Read

- Watch for clues that show Nathalie is not happy. She seems to enjoy storytelling, being both the teller and the listener. Why do you think that is?
- Notice the types of recreation and games that the children play.

After the Reading

- Tell why Gold Creek Bridge is important to Nathalie. How does this affect her hopes for the future?
- Nathalie thought the Bansemer house was the happiest place on earth. Why?
- Which games were “girls’ games” and which were “boys’ games”? Explain the reasons behind these designations. What were Nathalie’s favourite activities?

Extending the Reading

- Ask if anyone is willing to share an experience about a childhood memory that involves something like running away and hiding. Have the student(s) prepare, practice and tell the story to the class as a storyteller would, or prepare the story in the form of a short play to perform for the class. Alternately, have all students write an anecdote or a short story about a young child who worries about something s/he has done.
- Research games that children may have played in earlier times. This site from Emporia State University in Kansas has some good suggestions: http://www.emporia.edu/cgps/tales/m95tales.htm Make game kits complete with materials and instructions that students could use in small groups or with care partners. See Supplementary Activities at the end of this guide.
Thinking About the Writing

- Nathalie improvises a story with three suggestions from the children. Have students practice creating short stories using suggestions from the group, as was done in the novel.
- Add to the Vocabulary and Character Development charts.
- Add to the Reading Response Journal.
SUMMARY

Andy tells the girls that thinking deeply about something is more important than just knowing actual facts. With this in mind, he recounts the legend of Turtle Mountain to the girls. The legend tells of the creation of the world by the spirit creator “Napi” who now lives within Turtle Mountain. According to the Blackfoot people, “the mountain that walks” has been shaking due to Napi’s anger, and this prediction could be ominous. The girls are disturbed by this story, which does not have the usual happy ending that most of Andy’s stories have. Andy says that the Blackfoot people are real thinkers, and thus Nathalie worries about the meaning of the story. As they walk home, she envies the other girls who go home to large families, and she hopes that today her mother will be back from work when she arrives home.

PREPARING TO READ

Andy’s story serves two purposes in this book. It shows how oral tradition in First Nations culture is important in passing on cultural values and historical knowledge through the generations. But the author also uses Andy to create foreshadowing of the events to come in this story. Keep this in mind as the story progresses, and ask students to predict outcomes based on clues that have been given in the story.

- Andy’s stories often take the listeners to another time and place. Where do you think today’s story will take them?

AFTER THE READING

- What makes Andy such a good storyteller? How is Andy’s story today different from the ones he usually tells? Tell how this story affects Nathalie.
- Explain what Andy means about history books being different from storybooks. Which do you prefer to read and why?

EXTENDING THE READING

- Explore creation myths from various cultures. Students can work in small groups to research and present a creation myth from another culture. The format could include storytelling, performing reader’s theatre or performing a play. The following are possible titles.
• The Magic Tails Web site has links to a large group of creation myths from many cultures: http://www.magictails.com/creationlinks.html.
• Other resources might be found by doing a library catalogue or Web search using the key words “creation folklore.”

Thinking About the Writing

• Reread the last three paragraphs in Chapter 6. How does the author show you that Nathalie is worried and anxious? How does the author create relief? Notice that the same repeated word, “lights,” elicits both anxiety and relief through repetition. Have students write a short paragraph using repetition to emphasize an idea or an emotion.
• Add to the Vocabulary and Character Development charts.
• Add to the Reading Response Journal.
Chapters Seven and Eight
(Pages 40–51)

Summary

Nathalie and her mother have dinner together and talk about their day. Mother has received a letter from Aunt Sadie, asking if she and cousin Helena may come for a visit. Nathalie is ecstatic, but old feelings of insecurity surface when she realizes her grandfather is unaware of this visit and would not approve. Nathalie struggles with her feelings of guilt – she feels that her father’s death years ago was somehow her fault, as he died from measles that had been contracted from her. She also thinks that her physical resemblance to her father is causing her mother to have painful memories. Mother recalls stories of a joyful childhood as she curls Nathalie’s hair. Meanwhile the train from Spokane makes its way towards the town of Frank. The night crew prepares for the next shift in the mine. They notice that the last couple of days have seen some strange shifting of structures inside the mine. The atmosphere is ominous, as they go on with their regular duties.

Preparing to Read

• Mother receives a letter with exciting news. Who do you predict has written the letter and what will be the news?
• Watch for signs that there might be problems in the mine.

After the Reading

• Nathalie feels several emotions when she learns about the visit from Aunt Sadie (her mother’s sister) and her cousin Helena. Why is Nathalie excited when she hears about the visit?
• Explain her worries about Grandfather.
• Explain the feelings that Nathalie’s mother is having.
• William Warrington seems uneasy as he prepares to work on the night shift at the mine. Give reasons for this.
• In what way was the Frank coal mine different from other coal mines?
• Tell about Charlie’s importance in the mine.

Extending the Reading

Explore the Mineral Resources Education Program of British Columbia Web site. It has lots of information and pictures and video clips of the modern mining industry:
http://www.bcminerals.ca/files/student_resources.php

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Thinking About the Writing

- On page 50 the author writes, “The atmosphere was ominous.” Have students find the definition in a dictionary and discuss the meaning of ominous. Have students find examples that show how the author sets the tone through a physical description of the mine, as well as through the emotions and actions of the characters. Have students write a similar paragraph with a different mood. “The (noun) was (adverb).” Suggestions for nouns – movie, party, hike in the woods, game, book, conversation, plane ride.

- Add to the Reading Response Journal, Vocabulary and Character Development charts.
**CHAPhERS NINE, TEN AND ELEVEN**
*(Pages 52–64)*

**Summary**

The Spokane Flyer is delayed due to a snowstorm, which in turn causes delays for other people too. The freight train moves to a rail siding to wait for the Flyer. The trainmen joke about Turtle Mountain “walking” as they feel a tremor in the ground. Many travellers must stay at the hotel as they wait for the Flyer to arrive. At 4:08 a.m. most people are asleep in their beds, but Nathalie is awake, listening for the arrival of the Spokane Flyer. The earth begins to shake. It only takes 90 seconds for the mountain to crash down upon the town, leaving a path of destruction from the train yard, throughout the townsie, and into the mine itself. Nathalie has been cut on the forehead, and she waits at home while her mother tries to find out what has happened. It seems that the field side of the town, the area where several of Nathalie’s friends live, has been buried in the landslide. Nathalie’s mother tries to protect her, but Nathalie draws strength from within and vows to help as much as she can in the rescue effort. Her mother is surprised at Nathalie’s strength.

**Preparing to Read**

- Remember Andy’s message about the Blackfoot People in Chapter Five? If their prediction comes true, what could happen at Frank?
- In what way will the Spokane Flyer be affected?

**After the Reading**

- The Spokane Flyer is late because of a snowstorm. How does this affect Nathalie? Lillian Clark? The freight train workers?
- The miners laughed and joked when they felt a tremor under their feet. Do you think they really believed the mine was safe? Explain your answer.
- Nathalie was awake when the landslide began and yet her mother had to wake her at the beginning of Chapter Eleven. Explain.
- A parent’s instinct is to protect his/her child. How does Mother try to protect Nathalie? How does Nathalie react?
- What does it mean to be brave? Give some examples from real life.

**Extending the Reading**

Some people believe that having a positive attitude can affect the outcome of a situation. Discuss the sayings “believing the glass is half-full or half-empty” and having a “Pollyanna attitude.” Have students discuss how character attributes can contribute to strength and success. Have students work alone or in pairs to complete the activity on next page, which gives practice in rephrasing words from a negative point of view to a positive.

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Thinking About the Writing

- Foreshadowing. Recall how the author prepares the reader for a catastrophe.
- The actual slide does not occur until Chapter Ten. Look back and find clues from the earlier part of the story up to Chapter Nine that foreshadow the slide.
- Add to the Reading Response Journal, vocabulary and character development charts.
A Better Way to Say What You Mean

Think about the way you feel when you hear certain words. Instead of starting the sentence with “Don’t,” keep the meaning the same but begin your sentence with “Please.”

- (negative) Don’t leave your things on the floor.
(positive) Please pick up your things and put them away.

- (negative) Don’t be mean to your sister.
(positive) Please

- (negative) Don’t forget to do your homework.
(positive) Please

- (negative) Don’t
(positive) Please

- (negative) Don’t
(positive) Please

- (negative) Don’t
(positive) Please

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Chapters Twelve and Thirteen
(Pages 65–73)

Summary

Nathalie and her mother rush to the hotel to see how they can help. The nature of the disaster is still not clear. People are speculating – was it a mine explosion, a freak storm or perhaps an earthquake? Mother is recruited to the kitchen to prepare food as Nathalie observes the reactions of people and the ensuing chaos. She decides to find buckets that will be needed to help put out fires. Nathalie gathers up several children that are wandering outside in their nightclothes and brings them to safety. She overhears the train engineer and a police officer talking, and is seized by panic when she remembers that Aunt Sadie and Helena are on the train heading towards Frank. Is the train buried in the rubble, or is it still travelling? Will it be able to stop in time? A telegraph message gets through to Cranbrook to tell of the disaster, and two brakemen leave on foot to try and stop the passenger train before it crashes into the rubble in the dark of the night.

Preparing to Read

- How will the people react to this disaster? What problems or tragedies will they have to deal with?

After the Reading

- Describe the reactions of some of the characters – Nathalie, Mother, Murgatroyd (the train engineer), Constable Leard, “Old Bill.” Which actions were helpful to the situation? Can you think of some other actions that could have been taken? What technology do we have to deal with emergencies nowadays that people did not have in 1903?

Extending the Reading

- Individuals experience different emotions in panic situations. Have students role play reactions to different emergency situations and discuss the variety of reactions. Are some actions more appropriate than others? Can emotions be right or wrong? Do people always mean what they say in an emergency?

Thinking About the Writing

A simile is defined as a figure of speech that draws a comparison between two different things, especially a phrase containing the word “like” or “as.”

∑ Her hands were as cold as ice.
∑ The snow covered the ground like a blanket.

On page 65 the author uses a simile to describe Nathalie’s mother. “It was as if she were wrapping a coat of determination around her.” Explain how the author shows this determination. Have students compose similes related to characters or events in this section or previous chapters of the story.

- Add to the Reading Response Journal, Vocabulary and Character Development charts.
Summary

Nathalie and Abby take charge of child care in the hotel lobby, as parents are needed in the rescue effort. Mr. Chambers addresses the crowd in the bar, outlining the facts and plans in place. Toby rushes into the room, covered with blood and dust, pleading for blankets and bandages. Meanwhile, inside the mine, Warrington gets his leg splinted and bandaged by the miners, who discover that the entrance to the mine has been sealed. All men are accounted for, but Charlie the mine horse is missing. The men pair off trying to find an escape route but all tunnels are blocked, including the air shafts. This means there is a limited amount of oxygen to breathe and there may be lethal gases which could explode. The men decide their best option is to try to dig through the rubble to the entrance, not knowing if there are survivors on the outside of the mine. Toby recruits Nathalie to head over towards the slide and be a tracker, listening for voices of those buried beneath the rubble.

Preparing to Read

- What kind of rescue operations will need to be undertaken?
- What has happened to the miners? What dangers might they be in?

After the Reading

- List some of the ways that people helped with the rescue effort. What else could have been done? Decide which you think are the three most important and explain why.
- Inside the mine Chapman, the foreman, develops a plan for escape. How does he show that he is a strong and wise leader?

Extending the Reading

- Discuss the attributes of a hero. Describe some of the heroic actions in these chapters. Compare these with the attributes of a fictional “superhero.”
- The Grade Five English Language Arts Curriculum includes a unit on Heroes. Additional activities and resources can be accessed from: http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/docs/ela/gr5_samp/index.html

Thinking About the Writing

- In Chapter Fifteen, the author creates an atmosphere of life-threatening danger. Have students find descriptive words and phrases the author uses to develop this mood.
- Add to the Reading Response Journal, Vocabulary and Character Development charts.
Chapters Seventeen, Eighteen and Nineteen
(Pages 87–99)

Summary

Choquette, the train brakeman, is still trying to climb over the rubble to flag down the Flyer, but he fears it has already been buried and that there are no survivors. He imagines the chain of events that must have taken place, but when he realizes there is no fire, he regains hope that the train is still coming. He stumbles over the last of the slide, hears a train whistle and races towards the train, lantern in hand. Toby and Nathalie head towards Gold Creek (which now appears to be a lake) and the wishing bridge, which is gone. Nathalie grieves over the many wishes she made, now lost. She is disoriented as familiar landmarks are gone, but is relieved to discover the Bansemer family alive, although their house has been moved by the slide. Others are miraculously rescued amid the fires and rubble. Ruby and Thomas emerge on their own and try to make their way towards voices. As day breaks there are more rescues and also discoveries of some who died. Readers learn there are cries from below, cries that the rescue workers in the story do not hear.

Preparing to Read

- Recall Choquette. What might be going through his mind as he climbs over the slide, alone and in the dark?
- Where is the train? If it is buried under the rubble, what might that mean for the passengers? For the rescuers?
- How much of the town has been buried? What will this mean for the people of the town: the rescuers, the survivors, the dead?

After the Reading

- Remember back to the beginning of the story when Nathalie and Toby were doing chores together at school. What did Nathalie think of Toby then? How has her opinion of him changed, and why has it changed?

Extending the Reading

- On page 88 the author uses a metaphor to describe Choquette’s feelings of desperation. Have students illustrate him, sitting on his “throne,” including his vision of what lies below where he is sitting.

Thinking About the Writing

- A few paragraphs (pages 95, 97, 98) are written in italics. Why does the author do this? What information do we learn through this technique?
- Chapter Nineteen is entitled Hope and Despair. Look up the definitions of these two words, and discuss why the author chose this title. What were the signs of hope? Of despair?
- Add to the Reading Response Journal, Vocabulary and Character Development charts.
Chapters Twenty, Twenty-One and Twenty-Two (Pages 100–113)

Summary

Lester is injured but alive. Nathalie uses her wits to rescue baby Marion. Meanwhile, the disoriented miners continue to try to dig their way out. Their singing turns to despair as they begin to lose hope of survival. Nathalie continues to trudge back to town, with baby Marion inside her coat. As she reaches what was Gold Creek, she stumbles on something—a piece of the bridge—and she decides to make one last all-encompassing wish, which includes everyone in this disaster.

Preparing to Read

• Who do you think is making the tiny cry? What will happen to the miners?

After the Reading

• Lester’s life is in danger. Describe what has happened to him.
• Nathalie is ready to give up and head back to Frank to see how she can help in town. What was the real reason she wanted to go back? What made her stop?
• Toddlers are too young to understand a lot of what is happening around them. Nathalie knew this as she was trying to rescue herself and baby Marion. Do you think baby Marion is afraid? Why or why not? What were some of the techniques she used to keep Marion calm and happy?
• What do you think Lester was thinking on page 102?
• What was the attitude of the miners towards their job? How was this emergency situation different? Tell about their plan to escape. How did they rely on one another?
• Did Nathalie really believe that the wishing bridge had powers? Discuss how people search for strength in times of stress.

Extending the Reading

• Have students draw a map of their image of the Frank area, including Gold Creek and the wishing bridge, some of the homes, the railroad and the mine site. Or have students draw a cross-section of the mine, including tunnels, coal seams and a possible escape route.

Thinking About the Writing

• Reread the last four paragraphs in Chapter Twenty-two. How does the author build up the importance of Nathalie making a wish? The author does not tell us what Nathalie’s wish was; only that it was too big for words. Have students compose a paragraph telling what they think Nathalie may have wished for.
• Add to the Reading Response Journal, Vocabulary and Character Development charts.

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Chapters Twenty-three and Twenty-four
(Pages 114–123)

Summary

Nathalie, with Marion in her arms, reaches the other side of the lake. She discovers Lester and summons help. Nathalie carries Marion to Doc Malcomson's, where fatigue finally sets in. The doctor marvels at her strength and commitment, and her actions that have saved lives. She then reunites Marion with her older sisters Rosemary and Jessie, who are in shock from the knowledge that they have lost their parents. Surgery to remove the stake from Lester's side is successful, and several objects are removed from the wound, providing a little much needed laughter. Nathalie is thankful for the miracles that are emerging in the midst of disaster.

Preparing to Read

- At the end of Chapter Twenty-two, Nathalie was in the middle of the cold lake. What might happen to her and Marion? What might happen to Lester?

After the Reading

- Nathalie discovers Lester staggering over the rocks with the piece of wood still stuck in his side. Tell about their embarrassing moment. How would you have acted?
- Mrs. Williamson tells Nathalie she should be proud of her actions. How does Nathalie respond to the compliment? Why does she feel this way?
- How do you know that Doc Williamson is worried about Nathalie? Give examples that show his concern.
- People were laughing during Lester's surgery. Do you think this was appropriate, considering all the tragic events that were occurring? Why? Why do you think the author included this scene?

Extending the Reading

Nathalie reunites Marion with her two sisters. Ask students to think of words to describe how the girls may have felt at that time. Categorize and discuss these words; there should be two groups with opposite emotions. Have students look up the definition of “bittersweet.” Discuss how this word could be used to describe emotions in this part of the story.

Thinking About the Writing

- At the end of Chapter Twenty-three, Nathalie is developing a different opinion regarding herself and her grandfather. Explain her new idea and how it came about.
- Add to the Reading Response Journal, Vocabulary and Character Development charts.
Summary

Nathalie has a hard time accepting that her actions showed bravery. She learns that the train carrying Aunt Sophie and Helena was stopped in time, meaning they could still be alive. Although many people have survived the disaster, there are casualties and others are still missing including her friend Ruby’s father, who is trapped in the mine. It has now been hours since the landslide, and some people are wearily reuniting with family members. Finally the miners break through to the surface and the rescue team pulls them to safety. Joy for their escape quickly turns to silence as the shocked miners view the devastation of the slide. Some hear that families are safe, but Warrington has lost his entire family. Nathalie and Ruby waken to the jubilation that greets the rescued miners, one of whom is Ruby’s father.

Preparing to Read

- What might have happened to the train? What is your prediction for what happens to the miners?
- How will people prepare themselves for the news – good or bad?

After the Reading

- How does Nathalie feel about Lester? Give some evidence.
- What does it mean to be brave? Why does Nathalie feel that her actions were not brave? Do you think she showed courage? Why or why not?
- What were some reasons to celebrate? What were some of the concerns?
- Although there was joy when the miners finally broke through to the surface, there were other emotions as well. Tell about some of these.

Extending the Reading

- Imagine that you are one of the trapped miners or one of the rescue workers on the outside of the mine. Write a paragraph telling your thoughts during and after the rescue. Remember to include your worries and hopes.
- Investigate what technology is used in rescue efforts after landslides. Keep abreast of current events to see if there are any search and rescue operations on which students could report.

Thinking About the Writing

- Reread pages 129–130. Rescue attempts often don’t end quickly. How does the author show this?
- How does the author use Doc Malcomson to develop our understanding of Nathalie’s character?
- Add to the Reading Response Journal, Vocabulary and Character Development charts.
Many families prepare to leave town. Some will find work elsewhere. Lester and other orphans will be placed with relatives. Lester and Nathalie share some touching moments and exchange mementos as they say goodbye. Nathalie feels lonely and sad thinking about the changes and how she and her mother will soon be moving to Lethbridge. She remembers Andy, the storyteller who was buried in the slide, and Charlie, the mine horse who was miraculously rescued alive a month after the slide but died shortly after. Aunt Sophie and Helena returned home without coming for a visit, because there were still fears of danger from further landslides. Nathalie is disappointed because she had wanted to meet her cousin. One day as she is coming home from Gold Creek she sees the stagecoach arrive with three strangers. They receive a surprise visit from Aunt Sophie, Helena and Grandfather. Nathalie and her mother are surprised and moved by Grandfather’s tears and request for forgiveness. Nathalie and Helena form an instant bond.

Preparing to Read
- What will happen to the town now? Whose lives will be changed?

After the Reading
- Why did so many people leave the town of Frank? What would you have done if you had been a miner? A miner’s wife? Give reasons for your choice.
- Describe the relationship between Lester and Nathalie. What was the secret that they shared? Why was this important to their relationship? What was the significance of the objects that they exchanged?
- Why did Aunt Sophie and Helena not come to visit the first time? Why do you think they decided to come back again? Why didn’t they write to say they were coming?
- How do you think Nathalie’s mother felt when she discovered she was going to see her father face to face? How do you think Nathalie felt? Why did they feel this way?
- Use the Venn diagram to show some of the things that Nathalie and Helena have in common.
- Predict what will happen to each of the family members.

Extending the Reading
- Words are very powerful. Discuss with students the impact of Grandfather’s words at the beginning of the story on Nathalie’s mother and Nathalie’s self concept. Was it Grandfather’s intent to alienate his family? Why would he have been so harsh with his daughter? How does pride affect the relationship?
Thinking About the Writing

- Nathalie begins to look at herself differently as we reach the end of the story. Explain the techniques the author uses to show us how she changes.
- Complete the Reading Response Journal, Vocabulary and Character Development charts.
Author’s Note
(Pages 145–154)

The author suggests links to research information. See the Resources page in the Before You Read section of this guide.

Concluding Activities

Thinking about the characters

- Nathalie struggles with her feelings of low self-esteem throughout the book. How do other characters affect her feelings towards herself, both in negative and positive ways? Think about her mother, friends, teacher, grandfather and other people in the town. How has Nathalie changed throughout the story? Show examples of the growth in her character.
- Look back at the character charts you completed. Which character is most like you? In what ways? Which character do you admire the most? Why?
- What are the attributes of a hero? Who were the heroes in this story and why?

Thinking about the story

- What are some of the things you have learned from this book about family life and relationships between family members?
- Why is it important to understand our heritage? How could knowledge of what has happened in the past affect our behaviour today?
Supplementary Activities

Hold an “Old Fashioned Games Day.” Games and pastimes are described at this site, from Emporia State University in Kansas: http://www.emporia.edu/cgps/tales/m95tales.htm. Compile game kits using the descriptions, and have teams of students learn and teach games to other classes, or care partners.

Conduct a television interview. You and a partner will work together to conduct a television interview. One will be the interviewer and the other will be a character from the story. Choose an important event that happens in the story to feature on “The News.” Use the following steps as a guide.

1. Write your questions ahead of time, and practice. Here are some suggestions to get you started:
   • When did this happen?
   • Can you describe what happened?
   • Where were you, and how did you find out?
   • How did you feel when you found out about it?
   • Can you explain what happened?

2. Listen carefully to the answers. If anything seems unclear, ask further questions.

3. Always be polite.

4. Keep your interview brief. It should be from 2-3 minutes long.

Practice your interview with your partner. If you like, you can video yourselves, and make changes to improve your interview.

Create a video book report. Reading Rainbow (pbs) programs have student book reports included in each episode. Students may choose to do a video book report for this book and other favourites following this format. These could be shared with other classes or shown at an assembly. Several Reading Rainbow book reports can be viewed online as examples at: http://pbskids.org/readingrainbow/books/ From this link you may choose any book, and find video book reports done by children.

Create a logbook. A log is like a diary, but it is written more briefly. Ships and airplanes keep logbooks. A log tells the details of what happens throughout the day, and the times things occur. It might look like this:

07.30 hours: alarm went off, got up, ate breakfast.
08.30 hours: walked to school, played basketball.
09.00 hours: school started, read my favourite book.

Choose a character from the book, and write a log for the day of the slide. You may add things that were not actually in the book, but that you expect your character may have done. Put in at least one entry every half hour. You may use complete sentences with a lot of detail, or just short entries. You might want to include how your character feels about events.
About Coteau Books

Coteau publishes and promotes examples of the best fiction, poetry, drama and young readers’ fiction written in Canada. We are one of only a few publishers in the country who work in all these genres, as well as producing regional and creative non-fiction.

Coteau titles have been awarded the Governor General’s Award twice and been finalists seven times, in fiction, poetry, drama and children’s literature. Our list of award citations can be found on our Web site: www.coteaubooks.com.

We are especially proud of our expanding list of juvenile and young adult titles including the popular From Many Peoples series and numerous novels set in historical periods of the Canadian prairies.

Coteau Books’ current mandate includes our aim:

- to publish and present to the world market Canadian literary writing, with an emphasis on Saskatchewan and prairie writers
- to establish an active program of developing and publishing works of young readers’ fiction which demonstrate literary excellence as well as portraying understanding between people and the value of community
- to present new voices and works of literary excellence to the world market by developing new writers and fostering and furthering the careers of established writers